



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NEDL TRANSFER



HN 6E12 K

# IN LOCKERBIE STREET

A Little Appreciation of  
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

MABEL POTTER DAGGETT

KF 9977



KF 9977



1

2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
66  
67  
68  
69  
70  
71  
72  
73  
74  
75  
76  
77  
78  
79  
80  
81  
82  
83  
84  
85  
86  
87  
88  
89  
90  
91  
92  
93  
94  
95  
96  
97  
98  
99  
100  
101  
102  
103  
104  
105  
106  
107  
108  
109  
110  
111  
112  
113  
114  
115  
116  
117  
118  
119  
120  
121  
122  
123  
124  
125  
126  
127  
128  
129  
130  
131  
132  
133  
134  
135  
136  
137  
138  
139  
140  
141  
142  
143  
144  
145  
146  
147  
148  
149  
150  
151  
152  
153  
154  
155  
156  
157  
158  
159  
160  
161  
162  
163  
164  
165  
166  
167  
168  
169  
170  
171  
172  
173  
174  
175  
176  
177  
178  
179  
180  
181  
182  
183  
184  
185  
186  
187  
188  
189  
190  
191  
192  
193  
194  
195  
196  
197  
198  
199  
200  
201  
202  
203  
204  
205  
206  
207  
208  
209  
210  
211  
212  
213  
214  
215  
216  
217  
218  
219  
220  
221  
222  
223  
224  
225  
226  
227  
228  
229  
230  
231  
232  
233  
234  
235  
236  
237  
238  
239  
240  
241  
242  
243  
244  
245  
246  
247  
248  
249  
250  
251  
252  
253  
254  
255  
256  
257  
258  
259  
260  
261  
262  
263  
264  
265  
266  
267  
268  
269  
270  
271  
272  
273  
274  
275  
276  
277  
278  
279  
280  
281  
282  
283  
284  
285  
286  
287  
288  
289  
290  
291  
292  
293  
294  
295  
296  
297  
298  
299  
300  
301  
302  
303  
304  
305  
306  
307  
308  
309  
310  
311  
312  
313  
314  
315  
316  
317  
318  
319  
320  
321  
322  
323  
324  
325  
326  
327  
328  
329  
330  
331  
332  
333  
334  
335  
336  
337  
338  
339  
340  
341  
342  
343  
344  
345  
346  
347  
348  
349  
350  
351  
352  
353  
354  
355  
356  
357  
358  
359  
360  
361  
362  
363  
364  
365  
366  
367  
368  
369  
370  
371  
372  
373  
374  
375  
376  
377  
378  
379  
380  
381  
382  
383  
384  
385  
386  
387  
388  
389  
390  
391  
392  
393  
394  
395  
396  
397  
398  
399  
400  
401  
402  
403  
404  
405  
406  
407  
408  
409  
410  
411  
412  
413  
414  
415  
416  
417  
418  
419  
420  
421  
422  
423  
424  
425  
426  
427  
428  
429  
430  
431  
432  
433  
434  
435  
436  
437  
438  
439  
440  
441  
442  
443  
444  
445  
446  
447  
448  
449  
450  
451  
452  
453  
454  
455  
456  
457  
458  
459  
460  
461  
462  
463  
464  
465  
466  
467  
468  
469  
470  
471  
472  
473  
474  
475  
476  
477  
478  
479  
480  
481  
482  
483  
484  
485  
486  
487  
488  
489  
490  
491  
492  
493  
494  
495  
496  
497  
498  
499  
500  
501  
502  
503  
504  
505  
506  
507  
508  
509  
510  
511  
512  
513  
514  
515  
516  
517  
518  
519  
520  
521  
522  
523  
524  
525  
526  
527  
528  
529  
530  
531  
532  
533  
534  
535  
536  
537  
538  
539  
540  
541  
542  
543  
544  
545  
546  
547  
548  
549  
550  
551  
552  
553  
554  
555  
556  
557  
558  
559  
560  
561  
562  
563  
564  
565  
566  
567  
568  
569  
570  
571  
572  
573  
574  
575  
576  
577  
578  
579  
580  
581  
582  
583  
584  
585  
586  
587  
588  
589  
590  
591  
592  
593  
594  
595  
596  
597  
598  
599  
600  
601  
602  
603  
604  
605  
606  
607  
608  
609  
610  
611  
612  
613  
614  
615  
616  
617  
618  
619  
620  
621  
622  
623  
624  
625  
626  
627  
628  
629  
630  
631  
632  
633  
634  
635  
636  
637  
638  
639  
640  
641  
642  
643  
644  
645  
646  
647  
648  
649  
650  
651  
652  
653  
654  
655  
656  
657  
658  
659  
660  
661  
662  
663  
664  
665  
666  
667  
668  
669  
670  
671  
672  
673  
674  
675  
676  
677  
678  
679  
680  
681  
682  
683  
684  
685  
686  
687  
688  
689  
690  
691  
692  
693  
694  
695  
696  
697  
698  
699  
700  
701  
702  
703  
704  
705  
706  
707  
708  
709  
710  
711  
712  
713  
714  
715  
716  
717  
718  
719  
720  
721  
722  
723  
724  
725  
726  
727  
728  
729  
730  
731  
732  
733  
734  
735  
736  
737  
738  
739  
740  
741  
742  
743  
744  
745  
746  
747  
748  
749  
750  
751  
752  
753  
754  
755  
756  
757  
758  
759  
760  
761  
762  
763  
764  
765  
766  
767  
768  
769  
770  
771  
772  
773  
774  
775  
776  
777  
778  
779  
780  
781  
782  
783  
784  
785  
786  
787  
788  
789  
790  
791  
792  
793  
794  
795  
796  
797  
798  
799  
800  
801  
802  
803  
804  
805  
806  
807  
808  
809  
810  
811  
812  
813  
814  
815  
816  
817  
818  
819  
820  
821  
822  
823  
824  
825  
826  
827  
828  
829  
830  
831  
832  
833  
834  
835  
836  
837  
838  
839  
840  
841  
842  
843  
844  
845  
846  
847  
848  
849  
850  
851  
852  
853  
854  
855  
856  
857  
858  
859  
860  
861  
862  
863  
864  
865  
866  
867  
868  
869  
870  
871  
872  
873  
874  
875  
876  
877  
878  
879  
880  
881  
882  
883  
884  
885  
886  
887  
888  
889  
890  
891  
892  
893  
894  
895  
896  
897  
898  
899  
900  
901  
902  
903  
904  
905  
906  
907  
908  
909  
910  
911  
912  
913  
914  
915  
916  
917  
918  
919  
920  
921  
922  
923  
924  
925  
926  
927  
928  
929  
930  
931  
932  
933  
934  
935  
936  
937  
938  
939  
940  
941  
942  
943  
944  
945  
946  
947  
948  
949  
950  
951  
952  
953  
954  
955  
956  
957  
958  
959  
960  
961  
962  
963  
964  
965  
966  
967  
968  
969  
970  
971  
972  
973  
974  
975  
976  
977  
978  
979  
980  
981  
982  
983  
984  
985  
986  
987  
988  
989  
990  
991  
992  
993  
994  
995  
996  
997  
998  
999  
1000

1

1

i

.









# IN LOCKERBIE STREET

BY MABEL POTTER DAGGETT







JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

# IN LOCKERBIE STREET

A Little Appreciation of  
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

BY  
MABEL POTTER DAGGETT

---

NEW YORK  
B. W. DODGE & COMPANY  
1909



RF 9177



Copyright, 1909 by  
B. W. DODGE & COMPANY

---

Copyright, 1908 by  
*THE DELINEATOR*

---

*All Rights Reserved*  
Printed in the United States of America



**LOCKERBIE STREET**

**"The gravel roadway that fairly runs into a tiny Dame  
Trot cottage, standing right in its path  
at the end of a single block."**





"The cool dark branches of the trees lock and lovingly interlace above."

## IN LOCKERBIE STREET

**H**ARDLY anybody used to know where to find it. Tucked away in a secluded nook, it is so far that almost apart from the passing play it sees the shifting scenes of events. It is so near that almost across the curbstone of the next square, or the next, is the eddying throng of the commercial district. More than fifteen years ago a poet went there to live. There fame and the tourists have followed him. Now the soft brooding quiet of the little green lane is broken by the blatant bawling of the sight-seeing autos that announce, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is Lockerbie Street and Riley's residence!"

Yes, and once on a sultry summer's day as, on the front porch he refreshed himself with a cooling glass of innocent lemonade, the climax of dramatic interest was reached when the megaphone boomed hysterically, "Ladies and gentlemen, behold James Whitcomb Riley drinking a high ball!"

Oh! labelled and looked at like the star freak of a circus tent. Or, as he himself whimsically protests, "One might as well be a white mouse with pink eyes." So he retreats from the front porch where he loves to linger, but where lately

The cam-e-ras  
will catch him  
if he don't watch out!

It is only that the American nation knows now that some time ago in the middle west unto them was born the greatest poet of a generation. So they are coming to Indianapolis to bring him the laurel wreath of their admiration. That it is done in the curious vandal American way, that would crown him and then carry away a piece of the crown as a souvenir, makes the tribute not the less real. Only the staring glare of publicity shines a trifle unpleasantly in eyes that have loved so well just starlight and sunlight falling in flickering shadows in Lockerbie Street.

\* \* \*

PERHAPS you might not think that this would be where a man would want to live, who is reputed to have made a half million dollars from his verses. That is, you might not, unless it were given you to see with somewhat of his vision. It is quite apart from the fashionable district. It looks like something that the village forgot when it went on to its city days. It is narrow and quiet. There is so little hurrying that the grass finds time to grow soft green fringes between the red bricks of the humpety-bumpety sidewalks. The dark cool branches of the trees lock and lovingly interlace above the gravel roadway that fairly runs into a tiny Dame Trot cottage, standing right in its path at the end of the single block. And some of the houses nestle close to the sidewalk, and some have picket fences to set them apart, and one has a blue pump in the front yard, and one has its front porch sagging in a tired kind of way. They are not shiny, new and expressionless. They are all houses that say something. They are mostly weather-beaten and worn with the lives lived in them, and they

are all so human that you can almost hear their hearts beat. Anyhow, a poet can.

He lives at the large house, where in spite of the well-kept lawn that a negro servant tends to with care, there is an air of faded gentility about the brick residence that seems its apology to the rest for having terraced



"He lives at the large house where . . . there is an air of faded gentility."

stone steps and flower urns that they lack. People call it the Riley house. But he wishes they wouldn't. It isn't his.

"Why, they only let me stay here," he explains. Once he lived with a married sister. But there was a boy growing up there, of whom his uncle was fond, and "I've got some few eccentricities it wouldn't be good for a boy to get," says Mr. Riley. "So I packed up and pulled out before folks had

a chance to say, 'Um, he learned that from Jim.' " Afterward for a while Mr. Riley lived at a hotel. Then his most intimate friend, Major Holstein, an Indianapolis lawyer who also wrote sonnets, said, "Come and live at our house." And he has been there ever since. He seldom goes away when he can help it. Here is home. He has no other.

\* \* \*

OUT at Greenfield, a town twenty miles distant, he owns a house. It is the simple old frame house in yellow and white that he has immortalized in his verse. And people say, "Why doesn't he live there, he loved it so!" O, but that is just why. He loved it so. And now the voice of the house is still. There was a gentle, fair-haired woman and a tall dark man and five happy little Hoosier chaps. And he cannot find them anywhere, not in the little room up under the eaves where Bud and Johnny slept. Not out where they ate their supper on the porch, not on the winding spiral stair that used to echo with circus feats. Not even our hired girl Elizabeth Ann or the Raggedy Man answer his call in the kitchen. They are all gone away. And he cannot stay without them. But the crickets and the katydids are chirping a reminiscent musical note of his boyhood, and the scent of the old red apple-tree's bloom is heavy on the summer dusk. He pauses on the front piazza and looks down the road. For a moment he can almost see again long white caravans of prairie schooners moving by on into the West. Then out from the horizon, rimmed by a sunset sky, shoots a streak of light, and with a rasping, discordant buzzing, a trolley car has gone whizzing past, shattering its way ruthlessly through the white vision of yesterday.

And he goes back to Lockerbie Street. It will never have the haunting romance of the wonderful boy world from which he has journeyed. But it has living folks. And he likes it. It is about the one place left now where he can be a man as well as a poet. People who live next door do not stand off as he passes and nudge each other and

say in loud whispers, "There goes Riley." That thing elsewhere gets on his nerves. It's fine to be famous, but it's frightful to be forever on parade as a superhuman. It's like a man wearing a dress suit every day and not daring to bend for fear his smooth shiny shirt front might crack. See? Riley does.

In Lockerbie Street he is one of the folks. His life is linked with others by daily accustomed association. He can saunter into Trustin



"Out in Greenfield . . . he owns a house . . . the simple old frame house  
in yellow and white that he has immortalized in his verse."

Igoe's house — yes, that's the name, Trustin — without knocking at the door, and wander through the hall until he finds the family in the dining-room at supper. Then he says, "Say, Trustin, got any tobacco? I'm just out. Got to have some." On the front porch later, he may sit right down with his back against a post: "O, no, don't bother. I don't want a chair. But, O, this tobacco is a comfort! Do you know, when I'm dead, Trustin, I want you to see to it personally that beside me in the tomb they put a small table and on it a pitcher of water, a set of Dickens and a little tobacco.



For I wouldn't want anything to happen that I'd come to in there with no tobacco on hand!" He can be just that natural and familiar, as if he were not a great personage.

\* \* \*

ONCE they had a charity fair in Lockerbie Street and some one was trying to make a sign for the fortune-telling booth. Mr. Riley stopped and watched the work for a moment. Then he said, holding his hand out for the brush, "Better let me do that lettering. Sign painting was once my business, you know." And when the various booths had been apportioned among the different neighbors, they asked, "Now, Mr. Riley, what are you going to do for the Fair?"

"I'll do anything you want, if only you won't make a show of me," he replied earnestly. They had wanted him to give readings from his poems, but he wouldn't. So finally he compromised by writing the poem, "The Lockerbie Street Fair," which they sold for a dollar a copy.

At the corner grocery he has often dropped in to ask, "Any red apples to-day, Mr. Kiser?" When he gets one, he leans against a cracker barrel. Having polished the fruit carefully, he snaps his teeth in with the zest of a boy, and is off on reminiscences of the days when he was a wandering musician along with a patent medicine wagon, traveling through Indiana where the groceryman used to live. Or, if it is summer time, he stops on the sidewalk outside, tips a chair against the wall, and with other neighborly spirits, laughs and tells stories until bed time.

"See that man going by on the other side of the street with a basket?" says one. "He's worth a lot of money, and I knew him when he didn't have a cent."

"Owes me yet for the basket," chimes in the groceryman.

"Shucks," says Riley, "let me tell you a better one. Why, when I struck town, I'd hardly a rag to my back. Now look 'em over!"

It wouldn't have failed to create a laugh, for James Whitcomb, with all his easy going ways, is one of the best dressed men in

the faultlessly attired gentleman who daily walks out of Lockport with a gold headed cane and often with a white carnation in his buttonhole, as he starts down-town for his publishers. And before he's out of the city he has accumulated a following of children. If there is a little boy at the house with the blue pump, standing on a fence rail



"At the corner grocery he has often dropped in."

While playing telephone with the clothes line, Mr. Riley calls "Hello Amber Locks!" The first time they met, he lifted the boy over the fence, sat him down on the ground, looked at him gently, and said, "Son, you've got hair just like Hum used to have. Hum was my little brother, and grandmother called him Amber Locks." And as he goes on down the street, there isn't a child that he misses. He knows them all by name.

LAST summer there was a lemonade stand under the trees at the house beyond the red brick church. Lemonade was three cents a glass. But there weren't many buyers. The fingers of the small venders were not comfortably clean, and nobody knew if they washed the glasses. By and by it began to rain, and four of them scuttled off to the shelter of the big church doorway, leaving only the littlest boy in charge. Along came the fine gentleman, and though he didn't have an umbrella, he stopped in the fast increasing rain to say, "I'll take a glass of lemonade." And he drank it, too. Then he left ten cents and didn't want the change. He never does. Every newsboy in Indianapolis knows that. Among the little folk he meets he scatters pennies as freely as the sunshine of his words.

"You see," he says apologetically to any grown-up who catches him, "pennies are awful hard to get when you're a boy. Why, there isn't anything so hard as pennies. I remember."

Always when he comes home from down-town he brings candy. The children troop to meet him along the route, literally hold him up to go through his pockets, and he lets them. He and children know so well how to get together on a common meeting ground. It's the greatest embarrassment to both for grown people to make the introduction. He doesn't at all enjoy having Mary or Johnny trotted into the parlor in best clothes to recite "Orphant Annie" to him. And he never says, "How do you do, my little man?" or "Can't the pretty little girl give me a kiss?" Never! That wouldn't be Mr. Riley. If he and the children are left to themselves, he will sidle along like another child and say, "Hello! What's your name?" And if this doesn't work, he'll say, pretty soon, "Say, I know a story. Want to hear it?"

Invariably this will bring at least an affirmative nod. In another moment he is rambling delightfully on in the lines of the Raggedy Man or The Runaway Boy or the Bear Story. He is reciting the verses that great audiences would pay good money to hear. The children don't

know that. But they are listening open-mouthed, in fascination drawing nearer and nearer, until an absent-minded little hand may even have hold of his sleeve.

Better than this, even, he likes to play at being a child himself, until he fairly forgets that he isn't one. Amber Locks used to have broomsticks for horses, seven of them stabled behind the woodshed door. He and Mr. Riley named them severally Nancy Hanks, Star Pointer, etc. And Mr. Riley knew so well how to ride a broomstick horse with one's head thrown up high, very high! He'd told the boy how. But he just ached to show him. So he did one day. People looking from their windows saw the celebrated writer canter gayly along Lockerbie Street astride a broomstick with his coat tails flying in the wind. And when he stopped, panting and out of breath, there was in his laughing face something of the old glory of childhood that was good to see.

\* \* \*

SOMETIMES he puts the children into his books. There was a little boy lived next door. His name was David. And David had a spine that was crooked and crippled with rheumatism; and he was eleven years old. But his great ambition was to be a soldier. All the little boys around Lockerbie Street he used to gather daily in his front yard for training and he was the captain of the regiment. Always as Mr. Riley went by he would ask, "Well, and David, how's the regiment to-day?" Once at first, he had come along and found the boys in some altercation and had inquired, "What's it all about?" And David answered, "Why, sir, you see they all want to be officers, and it don't leave me any privates."

But the drilling went on. And one day David said wistfully as he walked by the poet's side, "Mr. Riley," and then very softly, "Mr. Riley, did you ever know a crooked soldier?"

"O, yes," promptly answered Mr. Riley, "and he was a very fine soldier, such a fine soldier indeed! David, do you see that robin over

When I came spring's here, and I never knew it. Did you?"  
Afterward when David was gone, it was to his mother that Mr. Riley  
wrote the beautiful poem about "The Little Boy That Sleeps."



"The little boy that sleeps."

caught his breath hard and said, "Oh, but I wouldn't like to paint those  
out." And he was looking at David's soldiers.

\* \* \*

So he has laughed and sorrowed with Lockerbie Street. Is it any  
wonder that he loves it? There is one house down at the end of  
the row that is quite new, only fourteen years built, while the rest  
have been built over forty. The people there thought it would be nice to  
have the street made modern, improved with cement sidewalks, asphalt  
pavements and electric lights. The others were talking about it in an

excited group, and Mr. Riley coming up asked, "What's the matter?" When they told him, he drew back as if warding off a blow. "Oh!" he said, "Lockerbie Street suits me just as it is." And his eye swept its length even to the grocery at the corner, plastered grotesquely with blue and yellow and green advertisements for soap and bread.

"Now I want to know," said the lady from the house at the end of the row, "do you like to walk the curb in rainy weather to keep out of the sidewalk mud puddles?"

"I've learned to," answered Mr. Riley cheerfully. Finally the will of the majority of the property owners prevailed. Their protest to the Indianapolis city officials was effectual, and they are left with their own in Lockerbie Street, unchanged as they want it.

So it is still known as Lover's Lane, where young people like to wander under the thick leafy shade on summer evenings. Through the low French windows of the unlighted drawing room where he sits, Mr. Riley sometimes hears their comments.

"I wonder if he's married," asks a girl, looking toward the house. "Sure," answers the young man, with an arm around her waist, "didn't he write that 'Old Sweetheart of Mine?'" And the author laughs to himself a little low laugh in the moonlight.

Nobody knows but Mr. Riley why he didn't marry. And he won't tell. It is one of the marks of his genius that he can look at life even without having lived it and see himself as the other man is. Yet somehow you feel that there should have been somewhere a girl of whom he was thinking when he painted the poem. Down around Greenfield there used to be a number of girls, Lizzie and Annie and Nell and Louise and Mollie. And sometimes now you meet there nice matronly women who look up quickly when you put the question, "Were you ever an old sweetheart of James Whitcomb Riley?" Then their cheeks grow girlishly pink as they admit, "Why yes, I believe I was a long time ago."



"And you pick it up and look at a sweet face with old-fashioned  
braids of hair."

**T**HERE is one pretty woman with softly graying hair who laugh-  
ingly holds up a bundle of old love letters, "Jim's, you see!" Out  
of them drops a little old faded photograph and she exclaims,  
"Why, I didn't know that was there. It's the one Jim used to carry in his  
pocket."

And you pick it up and look at a sweet face with old-fashioned  
braids of hair. Then you turn over the picture and read on the back in the  
same fine hand that penned the letters: "Friday night at Prayer Meeting,  
March 22, 1872—engaged September 1, 1872." If you are allowed to  
read the letters, you find the record of a quarrel in the church yard, and a

making up, with a happy-not-ever-after, but for three months longer—and then the end.

So it seems that Mr. Riley used to go to church when there was a girl to go after. He doesn't go much now. A neighbor in Lockerbie Street often says, "You ought to. Come, go with us to-day." But he will only promise, "Maybe, some time."

"I don't go to church only when I have to," he says. "I can't bear the awe and gloom. I don't like worship that way. It ought to be cheerful and joyful. I don't believe God likes Christians with long faces in an attitude of abnegation. I'd kick any one sky high I'd see do that to me, and God must want to."

"It just sort o' clabbers my mind to go to church. It's the groups of people gathering hushed and still. Swish, swish, Sunday silks coming down the aisle. The odor of black crêpe and the silence in which somebody'll hear your collar creak if you turn your head. Then there's the boom, boom of the bell. And it all brings back the gray day you came here before to put away a loved one; the procession of black carriages, the bleak wind—it's the heartbreak of life here in the house of worship. No, sir, I don't go to church when I don't have to."

As he stops talking the room grows still. He is looking off toward Greenfield. And he sees a long country road bordered with thirty-one poplar trees in a row. Their silvery leaves rustle and whisper sorrowfully. And at the end of the long road is a gateway with gilt letters, "The Park Cemetery." Then through the gateway, over down by the edge of the cornfield, there is a granite stone that guards four graves, and on it is written: "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain."

If anybody thinks because Mr. Riley doesn't go to church he hasn't got religion, just look in his verses and you will find it. If he ever does run short personally, it's only because he's put so much of his supply into his poetry. There's one poem prayer, if he never prayed another, would just about open the gates of heaven. When he walks among the flowers, too, he looks at them with long, long looks filled with a poet's reverent adoration





**N**OTHING less attractive than a trip to Greenfield lures Mr. Riley out of Lockerbie Street. He never takes a vacation. "There isn't so much in a vacation as some folks think," he says. "I like home best." It is with the greatest difficulty that he can be induced to go anywhere, even in Indianapolis. Hostesses at high functions lament the absence of the celebrity they'd planned to lionize. He simply won't accept their invitations. But let Trustin Igoe call out of the side window, "I say, J. W., there's 'wortermelon' at our house this evenin'. Come on over!" And he doesn't miss the engagement.

Even his own relatives usually come to Lockerbie Street to see him. There is his sister, Mrs. Henry Eitel, and her family; another sister, Mrs. Payne, and her daughter; a brother, John, and an aunt, Mrs. Frank Riley. With them also he is something more or less than a poet. "Aunt," he will say to Mrs. Riley when she comes on Sunday afternoons, "How well I recollect first time I saw you. I was a little tad at a church picnic, and Uncle Frank told me the pretty young lady in the white dress was going to be my aunt. My, but you looked nice, as nice as,—um, as nice as lemon pie!" And the lady flutters pleasantly and looks over her glasses and says, "You always were my boy, Jim." He likes that. There aren't many people left now to call him Jim.

Much as he enjoys playing at being a boy, though, there are times when he can't. Not long ago he met Trustin Igoe coming out of his yard one morning and said, "Lord, Trustin, what you going to raise next? Those ducks are just about more'n I can stand!" Mr. Igoe has had dogs and cats and chickens and pigeons and ducks. And the pigeons coo over Mr. Riley's chamber window and the ducks quack under it.



"The best dressed man in town."

"Why, J. W! Thought you was raised in rural scenes," Mr. Igoe answers. Ah, he was. But then he was a boy, and now he's a poet. And country sounds have a way of interrupting the making of poetry though they read so beautifully in it.

\* \* \*

UP there in the upper chamber is where Mr. Riley writes. When the light burns late the neighbors know a poem is coming. Mr. Riley is shut in there alone, and no material interruption must be allowed to call him back to earth. It is said that his face is shining, illumined. His secretary, who sees it coming, goes quietly out and closes the door. Down stairs, Mr. Igoe feeds the ducks bran till they are full to their necks, to stop their quacking. It may last for hours, perhaps all night. And Mr. Riley neither eats nor sleeps. But when he comes down from the heights where he's been, he holds a revelation that is vital with the throb of life. And people who love Riley and his wonderful verse believe that God still meets his chosen seers on the mountain top of transfiguration, even in Lockerbie Street.

Now listen to Mr. Riley's "Prayer Perfect."

Dear Lord, kind Lord,  
Gracious Lord, I pray  
Thou wilt look on all I love  
Tenderly to-day.  
Weed their hearts of weariness  
Scatter every care  
Down a wake of angels' wings  
Winnowing the air.  
Bring unto the sorrowing  
All release from pain;  
Let the lips of laughter  
Overflow again,  
And with all the needy  
O divide, I pray  
This vast treasure of content  
That is mine to-day.















